



## **Historic Black Powder Weapons Safety Regulations**

By their nature, any time weapons are used – with or without black powder – there is an increased risk of injury. Park staff and living historians are acutely aware of this and share both the concern and the responsibility for safe practices. Many living history groups hold their members to high safety standards, and the NPS depends upon a strong, consistently demonstrated commitment to safety for any person or group involved in a park event. Ultimately, though, it is the National Park Service that is responsible for the safety of an event.

All firing demonstrations will be done according to National Park Service Historic Weapons safety regulations, under the direct supervision of a certified NPS Historic Weapons Safety Officer, who will have the final say on the conduct of all historic weapons firing demonstrations. Safety is our primary concern and our common goal.

Before an individual or outside group can participate in a living history event involving historic black powder weapons at Castillo de San Marcos & Fort Matanzas National Monuments, all participants must be instructed on the below listed regulations and sign and return the last page of this Historic Weapons Firing Agreement.

### **Weapons Safety, the Public, and You**

To ensure the safety of participants and our visitors, a high degree of firearm discipline is expected of each and every participant.

- All weapons will remain under physical control of its owner at all times.
- No weapon is to be left unattended.
- Visitors may **NOT** handle or touch a loaded weapon.
- Visitors may touch an unloaded weapon so long as the owner maintains physical control of it. **DO NOT HAND YOUR WEAPON TO VISITORS.**
- Participants under the age of 16 may not handle weapons (firearms or edged weapons).
- **NEVER** point your weapon (firearm or edged weapon) at anyone, at any time.
- Soldiers on sentry duty may fix bayonets but must keep the musket in a vertical position and the bearer must maintain control of the weapon.
- Soldiers will **NOT** walk/march with bayonet attached to musket.
- Soldiers will **NOT** walk/march with a loaded musket.
- Soldiers will **NOT** fire muskets with bayonets attached.

### **Acceptable Weapon Types**

Only reproduction firearms may be used at the park. *The use of original firearms is prohibited.*

#### Permitted reproduction small arms:

- Flintlock muskets
- Flintlock blunderbusses
- Matchlocks
- Percussion-cap weapons (*only for special events planned in advance*)
  - o 1853 British Enfield rifled musket
  - o 1861 Springfield rifled musket



Prohibited reproduction small arms:

- Flintlock pistols (*cannot be fired but may be used for interpretive purposes only*)
- Revolvers (*cannot be fired but may be used for interpretive purposes only*)

Edged Weapons

- Edged weapons (swords, bayonets, knives, hatchets, spontoons, halberds etc.) may be drawn and brandished in a safe and prudent manner, when the bearer and the weapon are behind a barrier in a secure area out of the reach of visitors (i.e. officers carrying swords during the tactical demonstration, or infantrymen in a bayonet demonstration).
- At no time may participants engage in simulated combat with real or simulated edged weapons.
- When amongst visitors (not behind a barrier) swords, knives, bayonets, etc. may not be fully drawn. They may be partially drawn enough to expose some of the blade for visual inspection for interpretive purposes, but no visitor may touch the blade.

## Appropriate Drill Manuals

Appropriate drill manuals will be used by all participants handling/demonstrating historic weapons in the park. The acceptable manuals are those listed below that have been modified to meet NPS safety standards:

- 1728 Spanish Infantry Drill
- Spanish 1735 Garrison Cannon Drill
- Von Steuben's
- 1762 British Drill
- Hardee's Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics

## Ammunition

Unless prior arrangements have been made with the park's Historic Weapons Program Manager, ***do not bring any black powder with you into the park.*** If such arrangements have been made, the following criteria will apply:

All black powder brought into NPS areas by outside individuals or groups must be 1) in the form of prepared musket cartridges, 2) inspected by NPS personnel, and 3) under NPS control when not in use during a demonstration. Bulk or loose black powder is absolutely prohibited. Cannon cartridges and powder will always be provided by the NPS.

- Musket cartridge construction will be of sturdy paper only. Use of staples or tape is prohibited.
- Maximum charges
  - o 18<sup>th</sup> century muskets: 125 grains FFG (2F)
  - o 19<sup>th</sup> century muskets: 60 grains FFG (2F)
- The use of FFFG (3F) powder is prohibited for anything other than cannon primers
- The use of FFFFFG (4F) powder is prohibited for all NPS events.
- Unused cartridges will be collected after each demonstration.
- Powder contained in powder horns is strictly prohibited.
- Participants under age 16 will not handle powder.



## Inspections

All small arms used in firing demonstrations will be inspected by the NPS upon arrival to ensure serviceability of the weapon, and then inspected again just prior to and immediately after every firing demonstration to ensure the weapon is clear. **Weapons that fail inspection may not be carried. The owner must return the weapon to his/her vehicle or it will be secured by the NPS and returned at the end of the event.**

All weapons must meet the following standards to pass inspection:

1. Secured flash guard and hammer stall (flintlocks)
2. No cracks or splits in the stock
3. Furniture and barrel fit securely to stock
4. No missing stock pins or screws
5. Lock works smoothly
6. Half-cock position works properly
7. Flint is secured by leather or lead (flintlocks)
8. Steel and spring are in good condition (flintlocks)
9. Barrel free from visible dents or cracks
10. No excessive rust or corrosion on the barrel, lock, or touch hole
11. No fouling in the barrel or on the lock
12. No carbon buildup inside or around the cone (percussion cap)
13. Clean vent

## Testing Flint and Steel

With a flintlock, it is common to test the flint and steel before firing, either for interpretive purposes (showing the visitors how it works) or to ensure that everything is in working condition before firing. **Testing for sparks and preparing flint/steel for a demonstration may only take place under the following conditions:**

1. First “ping” the ramrod in the barrel to make sure the weapon is not loaded.
2. Point the muzzle downrange (only in the demonstration area) or straight up.
3. Never spark-test the weapon or knap the flint inside a casemate unless the lock mechanism has been removed from the stock/barrel.
4. **Never** point the muzzle in a direction that would cause harm to anyone if were to accidentally go off. This includes enclosed spaces such as the interior of the casemates.

## Firing Procedures

- All firing demonstrations taking place on park property will be done under the direct supervision of a certified NPS Historic Weapons Safety Officer.
- For protection from flash burns, all demonstrators firing black powder firearms will wear natural fiber, long-sleeved outer garments or full uniforms as appropriate to their historical impression.
- **Hearing protection must be worn during demonstration by all who are firing historic weapons. No exceptions.**



- Cannon crew members must wear proper hand protection, e.g. welder gauntlets. Thumb stalls are acceptable for the Right Rear position.
- Safety glasses are optional
- When firing muskets, **if you are not loading the paper cartridge, DO NOT use the ramrod.** Without the paper, the ramrod could create sparks when scraped against the barrel.
- Range safety standards will be observed at all times. Firing will commence or cease at the discretion of the supervising NPS Historic Weapons Safety Officer.

## Misfire Procedures - Flintlocks

### Failure to Spark

1. Call out “misfire” and hold the musket in the firing position for **10 seconds** to make sure there is no hang fire.
2. Return to the priming position.
3. Check priming and flint. Wipe down the steel. If knapping or otherwise working with the flint, attach the hammer stall and dump priming.
4. Re-prime if necessary
5. Return to the shoulder position and continue the firing procedure when ordered to do so by your company officer.

### Flash in the Pan

1. Call out “misfire” and hold the musket in the firing position for **10 seconds** to make sure there is no hang fire.
2. Return to the priming position
3. Half-cock the piece, and reattach the hammer stall.
4. Pick out the touch-hole, wipe off the steel and flint and re-prime.
5. Return to the shoulder position and continue the firing procedure when ordered to do so by your company officer.

## Misfire Procedures – Percussion Caps

1. Call out “misfire” and hold the musket in the firing position for **10 seconds** to make sure there is no hang fire.
2. Return to the priming position.
3. Half-cock the piece.
4. Pick out the cone using a vent pick.
5. Re-prime.
6. Return to the shoulder position and continue the firing procedure when ordered to do so by your company officer.

**If, after following these procedures, the weapon still misfires, you may retry ONLY TWO more times. If the weapon still will not fire, remove primer and turn it over to the Historic Weapons Safety Officer.**

## Misfire Procedures – Cannons

Demonstration is over. Volunteers will step away from the cannon and let the Historic Weapons Safety Officer follow necessary procedures to make the weapon safe.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas  
National Monuments

### Historic Black Powder Weapons Firing Agreement

Before an individual may participate in a living history event involving historic black powder weapons at Castillo de San Marcos & Fort Matanzas National Monuments, he/she must be instructed on the above regulations and sign this Historic Weapons Firing Agreement, which includes a copy of the Historic Black Powder Weapons Safety Regulations. This agreement must be signed and returned to the event Historic Weapons Safety Officer by mail, fax, or in person prior to participation. Participants must also complete a Volunteer Service Agreement so that they will be covered in case of injury while volunteering for the parks. **You may not participate in any events, with or without historic weapons, on NPS property without a completed Volunteer Service Agreement.** You will also receive a Position Description for the specific job/event in which you are participating to give you a more complete idea of the duties, benefits, goals, and expectations associated with the position.

Mail the completed agreement to:

Historic Weapons Supervisor  
1 South Castillo Drive  
St. Augustine, FL 32084

Or fax to: (904) 471-7605

I have read the above Historic Black Powder Weapons Safety Regulations and understand the conduct expected of me while participating in historic weapons demonstrations as a National Park Service Volunteer-in-Parks (VIP). I agree to comply with all NPS Historic Black Powder Weapons Safety Regulations and understand that should I fail to do so, I may be prohibited from participating in any future demonstrations.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Historic Weapons Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_